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SUBJECT: BRAZIL: POLICE SEIZE URANIUM ORE

1. (U) Brazilian Federal Police announced on Aug 24 the seizure last month of 1,320 pounds of uranium and thorium ore, the first time, according to press reports, that such a seizure has occurred in Brazil. (Note: In 2003 GOB officials told Poloff that they were unaware of any illicit trafficking of nuclear materials within Brazil. End note) The uranium and thorium ore, in granulated form, was taken from a van that was stopped for routine inspection about 120 km. from Macapa, Amapa State. The alleged owner of the ore was captured and charged with wrongful possession of illegal materials, punishable by up to six years in prison. Police revealed that the shipment was bound for Sao Paulo for likely transshipment out of the country. Value of the shipment was placed at USD 466,000. Since the material seized by police was raw natural ore, the U-235 isotope content was no more than 0.7 percent.

2. (U) Experts from Brazil's National Nuclear Energy Commission and the National Department of Mineral Production told the press that while this was the first seizure of this type in Brazil, they suspected it was not the first time raw uranium ore had been smuggled from the remote mining site in Amapa State. Officials described the amount of the seizure as "very large" and the operation as "not amateurish."

Danilovich